

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSY-02 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-01 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 ICA-11 OES-07
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3785

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, BTIO, TH, BENC

SUBJECT: STATUS OF NATURAL GAS PIPELINE PROJECT

REF: (A) BANGKOK 11420 (B) BANGKOK 9793

1. AT THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK AFTER EXPIRATION (ON APRIL 23) OF THE UNION OIL AND TEXAS-PACIFIC (T-P) CONCESSIONS IN THE GULF OF SAIM (REF A) IT APPEARS THAT: (1) THE CONCESSION RENEWAL ISSUE WILL NOT RPT NOT BECOME A MATTER OF ACRIMONIOUS PUBLIC DEBATE; AND (2) COMPANY OFFICIALS AS WELL AS RTG AUTHORITIES CONTINUE TO ASSUME THE CONCESSIONS WILL BE RENEWED SOON ON THE BASIS OF MUTUALLY AGREEABLE WORK PROGRAMS. EACH COMPANY LAST WEEK RECEIVED FROM MINISTER OF INDUSTRY KASEM A LETTER STATING THAT THE PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMS SUBMITTED BY THEM ARE BEING STUDIED BY THE RTG, AND ON APRIL 24 THE MINISTER REPEATED TO THE WORLD BANK'S BANGKOK REP THE ASSURANCES OF THE RTG'S ATTITUDE OF SWEET REASON THAT THE MINISTER CONVEYED TO THE AMBASSADOR APRIL 20. IN SUM, WE THINK ALL IS WELL.

2. ONLY PRESS INTEREST WE HAVE NOTED IN RENEWAL ISSUE

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WAS APRIL 24 ARTICLE IN AFTERNOON TABLOID "THE WORLD" WHICH REPORTED, INCORRECTLY, THAT ALL EXPLORATION IN THE GULF CAME TO A HALT APRIL 23 AS RESULT OF THE LAPSE OF CONCESSION RIGHTS. T-P HAS SENT LETTERS TO "THE WORLD" AND THE "BANGKOK POST" POINTING OUT THAT T-P IS CONDUCTING TESTS ON WELL T-P SPUDDED IN BLOCK 16 ON MARCH 20. (FYI: T-P OFFICIALS BELIEVE ON BASIS PARTIAL TESTING

THAT THIS WELL MAY BE THE BEST ONE YET.)

3. UNION OIL PLANS TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH DEPARTMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES (DMR) OFFICIALS NEXT WEEK ON PROPOSED WORK PROGRAM FOR CONCESSION AGREEMENT, AND TO RESUME GAS PRICE NEGOTIATIONS SOME TIME IN MAY.

4. IN ADDITION TO EXPLORATION ASPECTS, NATURAL GAS ORGANIZATION OF THAILAND (NGOT) OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF PROJECT. FLUOR CORP., WHICH NGOT SELECTED AS FIRST CHOICE ON TECHNICAL GROUNDS, PRESENTED COMMERCIAL PROPOSAL TO NGOT BOARD AFTERNOON APRIL 28; FLUOR EXECUTIVES HOPE TO OBTAIN FORMAL LETTER OF INTENT FROM NGOT EARLY IN MAY. ALSO, CHASE MANHATTAN OFFICIALS FROM HONG KONG WILL CONFER WITH NGOT WEEK OF MAY 8 WITH REGARD TO ROLE WHICH RTG EXPECTS CHASE TO PLAY AS FINANCIAL ADVISOR TO NGOT.
WHITEHOUSE

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